



MARITIME SAFETY COMMITTEE
72nd session
Agenda item 21

MSC 72/21
1 December 1999
Original: ENGLISH

WORK PROGRAMME

Enhancing the safety of large passenger ships

Note by the Secretary-General

SUMMARY

<i>Executive summary:</i>	The Secretary-General suggests that a global approach to large passenger ships' safety issues should be undertaken by the Committee
<i>Action to be taken:</i>	Paragraphs 8 and 9
<i>Related documents:</i>	MSC 70/23 (paragraph 1.5); MSC 71/23 (paragraph 1.5); and resolution A.900(21) – Objectives of the Organization in the 2000s

1 According to statistical information, there are, at present, 47 passenger ships of 50,000 gross tonnage* and above, built between 1961 and 1999, totalling 3,324,853 gross tonnage, capable of carrying 106,484 passengers and 38,389 crew members. Of these, 42 passenger ships, totalling 2,987,889 gross tonnage and being capable of carrying 96,075 passengers and 34,439 crew members were built since 1990; their average gross tonnage is 71,140, while their average capacity is 2,287 passengers and 819 crew members or 3,106 persons on board.

2 At MSC 70 in December 1998, the Secretary-General expressed admiration for the achievements of the shipbuilding and ancillary industries in delivering gigantic cruise ships embodying state-of-the-art technology. At the same time, he expressed the hope that the operational safety aspects in emergencies of these mammoth ships carrying thousands of passengers and crew members had been properly studied and satisfactorily resolved.

3 He repeated the same statement in his opening speech at FP 43 in January 1999 when he suggested that it would be prudent for the Sub-Committee to consider whether guidelines on an evacuation analysis for passenger ships, in general with special emphasis on new large cruise ships, needed to be developed. FP 43 unanimously endorsed this suggestion and asked the Committee to include an appropriate item on its work programme, which the Committee agreed to.

4 As the Committee knows, a number of sub-committees have been tasked with the consideration of safety aspects pertaining to passenger ships. In addition to the work on evacuation time and analysis carried out by the FP Sub-Committee, as mentioned above:

* The 50,000 gross tonnage figure has been used in this document for the sake of argument only and not as an attempt to define "large passenger ships".

- the DE Sub-Committee has been tasked with the consideration of life-saving appliance and arrangement matters;
- the FP Sub-Committee has, in addition to the work it has been asked to deal with as per paragraph 3 above, been tasked with the consideration of audible smoke detectors and smoke control systems for passenger ships;
- the SLF Sub-Committee is revising, in the context of its work on harmonization of subdivision and damage stability requirements in IMO instruments, SOLAS chapter II-1, Parts A, B and B-1, to make such requirements mandatory for passenger ships as well;
- the COMSAR Sub-Committee is considering SAR plans for cruise ships on fixed routes;
- the NAV Sub-Committee has just completed the revision of SOLAS chapter V recommending that automatic identification systems (AIS) and voyage data recorders (VDRs) should be carried on board ships, including passenger ships; while
- the STW Sub-Committee, acting on requests of the 1995 STCW Conference, has prepared, and the Committee adopted, amendments to the STCW Convention dealing with crisis management and human behaviour for personnel serving onboard ro-ro passenger ships and training of personnel on passenger ships. In addition, two new model courses covering crowd and crisis management have been prepared for consideration at STW 31.

5 All these and other important safety aspects pertaining to passenger ships are currently on the work programme of the above and other sub-committees and, while demonstrating the Committee's concern to further enhance the safety of passenger ships, at the same time they demonstrate that so far the safety of large passenger ships has been approached on a piecemeal and uncoordinated basis. The Secretary-General considers that the time has come for the Organization to undertake a global consideration of safety issues pertaining to passenger ships, with particular emphasis on large cruise ships. In order for this to be undertaken in a successful and co-ordinated manner, the Committee would need to consider how best to proceed. As in the case of bulk carrier safety, the Committee may decide to keep the matter under its own auspices, possibly through an *ad hoc* working group. This should not, of course, exclude the Committee seeking advice from any of its specialist subsidiary bodies, as the need may be.

6 The Secretary-General considers that such action would be well justified within:

- IMO's proactive policy, which would underline the Organization's move away from being merely reactive to events; and
- the provision in resolution A.900(21) on the Objectives of the Organization in the 2000s, that IMO's focus of attention should be on addressing safety issues by ship type, with particular emphasis on passenger ships, including high-speed craft.

7 In making the above suggestion, the Secretary-General is anxious to dispel any negative and unsubstantiated perception associated with the safety of the recently built large cruise ships, which he has no reason to doubt in any respect. He is similarly not concerned as to whether such ships comply with the most recently adopted SOLAS requirements applicable to ships of their category, because he is convinced they do. What, however, he thinks merits due consideration is whether SOLAS and, to the extent applicable, the Load Line Convention requirements, several of which were drafted before some of these large ships were built, duly address all the safety aspects of their operation – in particular, in emergency situations. Also, whether the training requirements of the STCW

Convention relating to personnel operating large cruise ships are in need of any review or clarification in the circumstances.

Action requested of the Committee

8 If the Committee agrees to the need for action to be taken to further enhance the safety of large passenger ships in the co-ordinated manner suggested above, it may decide to proceed along the lines recommended, namely through establishing a working group at its next session to work in accordance with terms of reference which may be decided during the present session.

9 If the Committee so decides, Member Governments and international organizations concerned may be invited to submit comments and proposals to MSC 73 for consideration and action as appropriate.
